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Mr. and Mrs. Arne
NARRATOR Madsen

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE Solvang

DATE Oct. 19, 1979

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Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Arne Madsen
Date of Interview: 19, Oct. 1979, Solvang, CA.
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: Mr. Madsen, lets begin by talking about your Grand-
parents?

Madsen: O K my father's parents came over here because a very
good friend in Denmark that was a sailor. He had skip-
ped ship in San Francisco and came across the U.S. see-
ing all this land laying unused in Iowa. He did not
want to come unless my Grandfather and his family would
come along. So finally they decided to do that. Grand
father and Grandmother on my father's side came over
here with six children. Two of them died early, four
survived. My Dad was 11 years old and the oldest. They
settled on the prairie. Grandfather was a ships carpen-
ter from the old country and built their home and also
friends homes who had come over. It was prairie, there
were no roads, there were no bridges, no telephones,
no modern communication of any kind. I remember vividly
how they discribed when they had a few hogs to sell,
they had to drive them by horse and wagon to Atlantic,
Iowa which was about 18 miles. They drove across the
hills as the crow flys. The prairie wolves would follow
smelling those hogs and wishing to have a bite.

PL: Could you tell me your father's name?

Madsen: M.H. Madsen. Mother's name was Gregersen. And I might
add here that Rev. Gregersen who was one of the founders
of Solvang was Mother's brother and Mrs. Gregersen was
Dads sister. We were always close to them. Well anyway
I remember my parents talking about the grasshoppers
coming in and distroying their crops totally. The cust-
om then was, Grandmother died in 1907 when I was 8, I
was born in 1899, Grandfather moved up to Mother and Dads.
Dads to live with them. In those days the old folks
never moved off the farm, they would build a home for
the younger generation. No peoples home or anything
like that. So Grandfather lived with us until 1914.

He died and I remember that vividly. I was 15 and I was driving to the funeral to the cemetery and my uncle and father were the only ones to attend because my mother was not well enough. She had a weak heart and my aunt was not well either. Uncle Hans Madsen and Father attended. His daughter married a Harksen, who was well known in this valley. Her husband started the Santa Ynez Valley Bank. It is now merged with the American National.

PL: Will you name your brothers and sisters?

Madsen: I had two brothers, I am the oldest, one of five children. Enor Madsen, Ingrid Madsen, who died a year ago. My next brother lives in Canada and was here for our 50th wedding anniversary, another sister Mrs. Elkington she has now moved to Solvang from Palo Alto.

PL: Tell me a little more about your Father?

Madsen: It was the tradition that the oldest son should inherit the farm and then of course share with the others. Dad was really not a farmer at heart. He was interested in politics and writing but he had to take the farm and pay the others their share and that was a burden. He did buy land out here in 1912, because as the colony had started in 1911 and as I mentioned our uncle was close to them, Gregersen and Dad wanted to help start this colony. But I feel he also had a bit of vision because the Panama Canal was almost finished and the canal would put the West Coast on the spot, which I think it has. But unhappily the depression had hit us in Iowa and we lost the farm because of the depression. We did not get a good price for it. We sold in 1944 after Dad passed away, Mrs. Madsen and I were the only ones of the family. I was in the Post Office here and could not get enough rent to pay the mortgage and whatever.

PL: Where was the farm located?

Madsen: Chalk Hill Road, Solvang. We had 360 acres to begin with 1918 Dad bought another 360 acres. My brother in Canada sold half of it while Mrs. Madsen and I were living in Santa Barbara. When we married we moved to Santa Barbara to try to make a living in the depression days. My brother came out to take what he could from

the farm. Things were tough in the early 30's for farmers, in fact I was drafted in the First World War but was deferred because I was the only one to manage the farm. Dad was ill then. We had hogs, cattle, grain and Iowa corn. I was born and raised in Iowa. I came to Solvang in 1923-4 and worked as a young man on the rock crusher at the Old Red Bridge. When they paved the roads in the Valley they used this rock. Then I quit, then worked for _____ lived and boarded with Mrs. C _____ on Laurel Street. She had lost her husband was a woodworker. She had some land on the flats and we dug the irrigation ditch on the land where the Ford and Chevrolet Agencies are now. That was tough digging as it had been such a dry winter. As I recall we had only a half inch all that winter. Then we went back to Iowa, in March. They got a good rain after that I understand and had a good crop.

PL: Why did you come to Solvang in 1923?

Madsen: The main thing was our farm burned down in Feb. 1927. and the land out here had been a loss from 1912 to 1927. Dad had always had an interest in the West Coast so he figured we should come out here and see what we could do. They came out piece meal with Dad and my brother first then my Mother and younger sister later that year. June. My older sister was married and living in Chicago. I stayed back there another year and hired out to a neighbor who was leasing the farm. So in June of 1928 I came back to Solvang to stay. But I was so homesick, these dry hills and such, I went back to Iowa to pick corn again. But in the meantime I had met Mrs. Madsen so I came back out.

PL: How did you travel?

Madsen: By train, it took three or four days. We had driven a few times. In 1928 my brother came in from Iowa and bought a little truck and put the furniture we had saved from the fire and hauled it out here, that took us a week.

PL: How did you meet your wife?

Madsen: My Mother introduced us. We met the day the Danish Church was dedicated, July, 1928. It must have been love at first sight because we kept company always after that. We were married Oct. 1929. We just celebrated our 50th anniversary.

In those days in Iowa we had a school on every square mile so I had as much as two miles to walk. We did not start school as early as they do now. And I was the first one so I did not start school until I was 7.

I could not speak a word of English. We had spoken Danish in the home. Later on the town of _____ Where I was born, a school was established and we all went there for the rest of our education. Mine was very limited because I was the only one to work the farm. I did not go to school from March 1 to Dec. 1.

It turned out that the depression followed us out here and we t5ied sheep and we lost quite a bit there, then we tried dairing and established a small herd, my brother and I milked 60 cows by hand. When I met Mrs. Madsen, I had a problem, to go with her and still be home to do the milking. After we were married we were supposed to take over the farm but we could see that there was too much of a family here to do that. So Mrs. Madsen had been a nurse at Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara, and she took care of a little girl whose parents lived in Mission Canyon, named Spaulding. They asked her to come home and be the girl's private nurse. She stayed three or four years and as Mrs. Madsen had no relatives in America, Mr. Spaulding gave her away. The little girl she took care of was the flower girl. The they wanted me to live with them too. Which we did and I worked at various jobs maily I drove a taxi. Then I worked for Safeway Stores. My last job was as delivery person, they delivered then. I delivered for four stores in Santa Barbara. When I quit they went to cash and carry and did not deliver any more.

Mrs. Madsen came in at this point

PL: Mrs. Madsen did you take your training in nursing in America?

Mrs. M.: No, in Denmark. I came over as a trained nurse, for three years. I had a whole ward to look after there. I decided to come to America to see something different. I asked for a leave of absence for three years. I was on my way to Annapolis where I understood there was a very nice hospital but I had met people on the boat and they were from Cedar Fall, Iowa, they asked me to stay with them. I did and one evening they had a party and I met a nurse from the hospital who said they were very short of nurses, and would I come up to a party the next night and see what the hospital was like. After I was there for awhile I had an appendix operation.

Madsen: It was written up in the Danish newspaper and I read the article and felt sorry for the nurse who was so sick and had no family in America. I know her friends and she was in my cousin's home but we did not meet until she came to Solvang.

PL: It must have been a great decision to come to America?

Mrs. M.: I was going to go back, it was just to learn more about nursing. To try to see how it was done here.

Madsen: She had promised her family and friends to be back in Denmark in three years, she came in 1926, then I got in the way. So in 1931 we managed a trip back to Denmark. They thought she might have married a Chicago gangster or hip shooting cowboy. We went to see the family. They were almost shocked when I could speak Danish.

Mrs. M.: I took my state board tests in Des Moines in order to stay here after being here 5 months. I got a ninety-eight on my test and was very proud. I could only speak a little English that I had learned in school. That is entirely different than the every day language. I did my work and knew everything in Latin and I thought I would get along. But when the doctors came along I would always go somewhere that I could hide myself. Then they would find me, knock on the door, as they wanted to talk with me.

- PL: How did you get to California?
- Mrs. M.: That was when I took ill. I had a very bad appendicitus but went back to work after three week and the doctors tokd me I had come back too soon. They advised me to take a trip. I never did go back. I came out to Atterdag and loved California and stayed. At that time I came to stay at Atterdag for a few weeks. I got work in Santa Barbara.
- Madsen: When we returned from Denmark in 1931 we needed another job, there was a private girls school in Santa Barbara on Constance Street for the very affluent families.
- Mrs. M.: I stayed there as school nurse and assistant housekeeper.
- Madsen: I was the chauffeur. We had a little bus and would take the girls to dances and be with them. Many places in Montecito and Ojai. In Feb. 1932 I had a stroke. I laid around and she completed the school year. We finally came back to Solvang to our friends. President Roosevelt had been elected and it was the custom that the postmaster changed with the parties in power. So the Democratic Party and my friends here asked if I would take the post office if it could be arraigned. May 8, 1934, I had a special delivery letter from James A. Farley including the necessary papers directing me to take charge of the Solvang Post Office. I stayed there almost 32 years. In 1941 Camp Cook, which is now Vandenberg was reactivited and the War Department had learned about Mrs. Madsen being a nurse, and they wanted her over there. We had two boys, Vern and Ed., they were four and six. The post office was small only thrid class, I was clerk and Post Master, all of it. So we discussed it with the War Department and the Postal Service, if Mrs. Madsen could come in and help at the post office instead of Camp Cook, and then we could take care of the boys. It turned out that we could do that and she started on Feb. 1941. This little booklet say we had 57 years of service between us.

PL: What does it mean by third class at the post office?

Madsen: Third class is an official post office but the lowest class. Then comes second, then first. Services are not as much and you are paid as Post Master, depends on the volume of stamp sales and fees for money orders. I can remember my first year was \$2,800 in 1934. And when I left it was close to \$100,000.00. Solvang at that time was only about 300 people. The building was where the Hansen Deli is and we owned the building from 1935 on. We were in when we built the new building. It took almost ten years to get the new building. Lots of paper work. In 1945 we became second class and I had gotten sick, we had a new clerk, new book-keeping with Mrs. Madsen sick too, we were in quite a mess for a few days. The Post Master in Buellton was a good friend of mine he had retired and was willing to help but it was against the law to pay a retired person but he did help for a couple of days. 1962 we moved into the new building and we established cuty service then. We had established rural service in 1948 that served all the area around Santa Ynez and Los Olivos.

End of Side 1, Tape 1.

PL: That would be in an auto, to deliver all around?

Madsen: Yes, he drove out everyday. I also did the driving when he was on vacation. I figured we served at least 2,500 people.

PL: You started a travel service?

Madsen: It wasn't legal to use the post office so we had the service in the home. I only had the Scandinavian Airlines to begin with. And some boat agencies. But it wasn't long before I had all the necessary connections with domestic and overseas agencies. My uncle, Hans Madsen started the service with the boats but did not have any airlines here in Solvang. He was a banker but everything went in the depression. It grew very slowly until I retired in 1965, I used this little room here and it really grew. I had more time, seven days a week sometimes until 11 p.m. The last year I guess I had a

gross of \$200,000 of sales. I did earn three awards from Scandinavian Airlines for being top one hundred in sales in America. United was my biggest airline as it came in Santa Barbara. I enjoyed that work, it was a challenge and was educational. I know I should not have sold it but I could see that the community was growing tremendously and it would be a big business and it meant I would have to move uptown and hire a girl or two and I was 72 years old and I did not feel up to it. Sold it to Daryl Nielsen in 1971 with the stipulation that I would work for them six months to train them.

FL: The new building for the post office is the one at the present location on Alisal?

Madsen: Yes, we moved there in 1962

I was knighted by the Danish Government in 1966. We had been accustomed to going to Los Angeles, the Danish Consulate to celebrate the King's birthday. And we were there on March 11. I have worked for the consul for 30 years, in issuing Danish passports. I witnessed the signatures to save the people from going to San Francisco or Los Angeles. It was quite an accommodation to people to have me close. The Consulate would send it to me and I would witness the signatures. When we went down there in March 1966 to celebrate the King's birthday there was quite a big party at this home, in Belaire, when all of a sudden I was asked to come forward I was shocked when they gave me this medal. Laurence Melchior came up and stood next to me. I have a picture of it. I have only worn it once, because you are not allowed to wear it until royalty are present. Mrs. Madsen's parents were here in 1939 as the Crown Prince was here and I gave an address of welcome then but in Danish. I guess the community knows that I am Danish although I was born and raised in Iowa. I have continued the heritage that is important to me. I realize that the next generation, and there are a lot of them including my boys, Petersens and Nielsens, and some of them that wish to perpetuate the culture but not the language.

PL: Lets talk about your boys for a minute?

Madsen: Vern was born in 1936 and Ed in 1938. They were born here. We lived on First Street. They spoke Danish until they started to school.

PL: Mrs. Madsen, were the children born at home?

Mrs. M.: No, I had caesareans. They were born at Cottage Hospital. I did not nurse after started to work at the post office and I had the children. I did help out at special times. I did not want to work at the base, it was too far.

PL: Did the boys go to valley schools?

Madsen: Vern completed all his highschool at Laguna Blanca School in Hope Ranch. Spaulding was headmaster. The Spauldings were like second parents to us. And he wanted Vernon to go to Laguna Blanca. Eddie took his high school at Santa Ynez High. Vernon went on to Berkeley and graduated. While in Berkeley he took the Officers Training so he ended college as a 2nd Lt. He loved flying so he went into flying and was in the Air Force, in Germany $4\frac{1}{2}$ years as a fighter pilot. There was no war but the Berlin Crisis was on and they had some tense days.

Eddie during highschool went to GrandView for a year, and then came back and worked at Vandenberg and became an Electric Technician and wired the Titan II. He couldn't go any further because he did not have a diploma so he was a little discouraged so went to Hancock 2 years. He worked for Informac (?) as a technician altho his major was physics. He worked in Goleta for 7 years. Then the ? Medical Corp. asked him to come over to them and they increased this salary. They were manufacturing medical equipment for the doctors and hospitals before they sold out to 3M Co. They had made him Chief Engineer for the plant. Then 3M made him director. He had his hands full and travels some to the Food and Drug Administration. His wife Betty, is manager of Sambos in the training department. So they are very busy. That is probably the most gratifying to us that the boys are close, that they wish to come back to the Valley.

I feel that we should be grateful for all the local boys who have stayed or come back to the Valley. Vernon lived in New York after Germany and he flew to Europe from New York. They were there four years and he flew the Atlantic only. He was anxious to come out here, he hated New York. His wife was born in New York so we were concerned. Vernon commutes to Los Angeles for every trip he makes, sometimes twice a week.

PL: What do you foresee for your grandchildren in the Valley?

Madsen: Well, I don't know. Chris is taking First Aid and Rescue work. Besides he is very interested in computers. I don't know what they will do, I didn't. I wanted a farm but I couldn't and had to do something else. Vernon always knew what he wanted to do but it took Eddie a little longer to decide.

PL: What about the future of Solvang?

Madsen: That's the 64 dollar question! Personally I feel we need some sort of control, we are going to vote on the 6th, and I can remember at one point 5% should be the limitation, there are two sides to that issue, because if we stop it altogether all our young people that are engaged in work here are going to have a hard time of it. But on the other hand, building should be done by our local people and I'd like to see the Valley grow by individual people that buy property and not the big projects. I think we are going overboard in Solvang and building more than we can expect to accommodate, especially with the economy as wobbly as it is and the gasoline prices going out of sight. We can feel it in Solvang, and we may get hurt. I was appointed chairman of the Parking Commission for Solvang, and we could not do much because of legal squabbling over what power we had, and now it's been settled. I brag, because all of a sudden we had plenty of parking.

PL: Do you think that if Solvang becomes incorporated it will help the town?

Madsen: I was on the fence when we tried to get it in 1975 but I wrote an article that Daryl Nielsen took down to pre-

sent to the hearing and although Daryl and I disagree often, that one he thought was good and he asked permission to use it at the hearings. I felt Solvang should have the right to determine their own destiny not the county. I feel we have an economy to do it. Perhaps it seems that the county's reluctance to allow this is they probably want to keep the revenues they get out of it. It seems that we should. My little town in Iowa was incorporated when there were 300 people in all of the town. And thats about all there is still. They manage their own affairs very well. But I think we could do it alot better, our economy is way, way beyond that. It should be someone that we all have confidence in.

PL: Can you tell me about some of the pioneers of Solvang?

Madsen: I might say there are so few left now. There were the Gregersens, the Hornslys, Nordentof, those were the three who started the town. They have been gone along time. Then there was Fausero, Eton, Svensen, Nielsen, Fred Petersen, Johanas Jensen, Chris Johnsens, Henry Johnsen, Charles Wulff. Probably 40 people I knew in 1923 that are all gone. And now I will be 81 in January myself. I am beginning to be an old timer. We had been in close contact with the biginnings of Solvang since 1911. Because Mother was such a good letter writer and as she was Rev. Gregersen's sister there was a close relationship. We knew all the time what was going on. We were in harmony with it. I feel that I have known Solvang from the very beginning. You know there are at least several elements in the community that is inevitable when you get new people coming in all the time. I was on the school board when they built the new addition to Solvang School and I was on the county school board for 11 years. Chairman for three years. But the only ones that have been unified in all the years that I know, has been going on, it is a waste of tax payers money although we didn't get any salery we were paid transportation.

and meals. We unified Lompoc and Carpinteria schools when I was chairman. Those are the only ones that were unified in the county. I feel that 40 or 50 years to unify here has been a waste. We tried here 4 or 5 times but they wouldn't go for it. If any community should, we are so close to one another in the valley, we should do it if it could be done. But we could not prove that there was any saving in it. From Ellwood to Los Olivos. As we grow now, we have had an awfully good group of people come into the Valley that are not Danish, that support everything good in the Valley. Some come in with multimillion dollars and develop complexes that I am not sure will benefit the community.

PL:

Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Madsen for this interview.

End of Side 2, Tape 1